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Beach, Seneca C.

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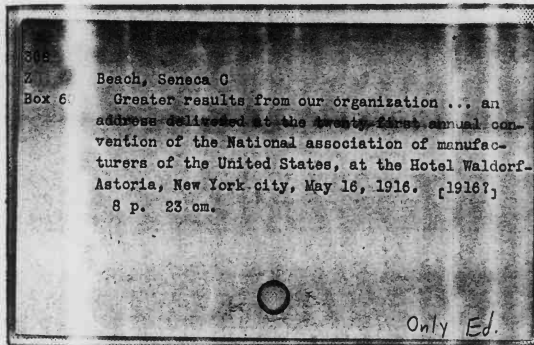
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Greater Results from Our Organization

By Seneca C. Beach

President of the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association
of San Francisco

An address delivered at the Twenty-first Annual Convention of
the National Association of Manufacturers of the United States,
at the Hotel Waldorf-Astoria, New York City, May 16, 1916

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Mr. President and Gentlemen:

The subject that I have chosen is altogether too great and too valuable to be dismissed in a short paper of this character. I have undertaken to touch only the high places. I hope that it may be discussed hereafter a little more fully.

We who come from the Far West are not accustomed to much formality. Therefore, I know you will forgive me for many of my informalities.

A few years ago there appeared on the financial horizon, a man from the East, whom we in the West believe to have been the greatest industrial constructive genius of his time. He made two blades of grass grow where but one grew before. A railroad in the hands of a receiver for defaulting in payment of the interest on its bonds—he made pay interest on double the amount of bonds and also rehabilitated the system so that it paid dividends on its stock. This man was the late lamented E. H. Harriman. He gave voice to a favorite adage, and it is to be the theme of my talk:

"Much good work is spoiled for the lack of a little more."

Every thinking man believes in organization. While the nineteenth century was a period of unlimited (and destructive) competition, the twentieth century has produced the acme of organization, coöperation and prosperity.

James A. Emery says: "We are living in an age of organization, and are beset by it."

Whether this is morally good or bad, we at this time need not consider. What we must consider and apply practically is the force for good and for constructive advancement and progress of the units of humanity that we are dealing with, and must continue to deal with.

It is a waste to take your time in citing the good results of proper organization. I fancy you are all committed to the principle. In lieu thereof, let us analyze the reasons why the business man is not securing *all* of the results of his energy in his organization efforts. I am going to read now a sentence that I am sure will be understood by those of us who came originally from country cross-roads, where on Saturday afternoons we indulged in the sport of country horse-racing. Many mediocre horses can run a quarter of a mile fast, but it requires a thoroughbred to go the full mile at top speed. Quarter horses are not in much demand, but there is an unlimited demand for a horse that can run a mile in 1:40. Our business men in their business have neglected to see that they have been going only part of the route. They have been running well to the quarter post, but there stop, or else slow down the balance of the distance—that essential distance necessary to accomplish the results desired.

On the Pacific Coast, we have had our share of those citizens who go but part way in the processes necessary for the greater and better results. They have lacked the forethought to see and know that their quarter mile investment should and must be supplemented and protected by the additional three-quarter mile run. Our business men have performed only part of their duty. They have neglected politics.

They have failed to do their part in specific organization work. They have left such detail of duties to their employees, and naturally the "beans have been spilled." The word "politics" leaves a bad taste in the mouth of the average business man. Therefore, he calls the same "rotten" and he will have none of it.

Need for Firmer Organization Among Business Men

But in this year of our Lord 1916, the busy business man has come to know that there is something wrong somewhere with the commercial and industrial machine.

When he comes to record in his mind the fact that our Legislatures and Congresses have in the past few years enacted a total of nearly 70,000 laws, so-called, and that a majority of these laws

have been aimed at the regulation, restriction, and curtailment of business, Mr. Business Man should then make a record *also* of the reasons therefor; for such reasons are simple and easy.

All this array of fool laws was produced by lack of quality in the members of our various legislative bodies. This lack of quality lies at the door of the business man. He has not performed his duty in organizing to secure the election of his peers. He has called the procedure of such election "rotten politics," forgetting that politics are government and government is politics—and both are good or bad, dependent wholly on the *quality* that enters into one or both. A quantity of men always means a mob, while quality means leadership. Business is politics and politics are business, and the business man must get into politics completely. The good citizen, by reason of his indifference or lack of proper organization, is responsible for every bad law and every wrong and inefficient man in office.

The business of the country must cease depending on its statesmen and reverse the dependency and make the statesman depend on the business man. Every statesman is king in his home town. He, with few exceptions, maintains his own organization for but one purpose—his election and his re-election. He cares little for the great questions of the day. In fact, he cares but little for anything save his own perpetuation in office. His first thoughts are of himself; his second thoughts are ditto and his last thoughts are always of what he can do or say to make more votes for himself. When he introduces a bill or votes on another, his first and last thoughts are how many votes will he make by such actions? Hence we see the deplorable spectacle of thousands of fool laws—all to catch votes—but few for the general and patriotic profit of the whole people.

Business men must substitute their organizations for that of the statesman. Organized votes control the statesmen. It does not require a majority vote to control—if such vote is organized. A pitiful minority often dictates to and controls the statesmen, but it must be, and is, organized.

In San Francisco, last year, a self-constituted body of unselfish and representative business men organized a political campaign to induce better men to become candidates for supervisors. (San Francisco is a combined city and county government, and the eighteen members of the Board of Supervisors are both the legislative and administrative body governing the city and county.)

The campaign inaugurated by the Municipal Conference was successful in the primaries in nominating a representative ticket. But, unhappily, many of the business men who had energetically worked for the successful ticket at the primaries, went to sleep at the switch in the subsequent election, neglecting to vote, and almost the entire ticket was defeated. As an example: One nominee on the Municipal Conference ticket received the highest vote of any candidate in the primaries, but at the subsequent election received fourteen thousand less votes than were received by him at the primaries. He was not defeated thereby, but the balance of the ticket was defeated.

By way of an aside, I will say that I attended a dinner a night or two after the election in San Francisco, at which seven business men were present, and six of them confessed that they had not voted at the election the day before.

Here we have an illustration of the quarter horse, which is more apt and to the point than my reference heretofore; also that "much good work is spoiled for the lack of a little more."

The details here recited lead me to the main point, the great need for the curing of an almost universal condition; *i. e.*, the lack of complete, final, and daily coöperation among business men.

A National Employers' Federation

There should be, and must be, a national federation of employers' and business men's organizations. If organization is valuable in its small activities, if organization is necessary in the conduct of a private business, if organization is essential in the conduct of the government, if organization has proven profitable in the National Association of Manufacturers, we must have a national organization by federation of city and State, merchants' and manufacturers' and business men's associations, in order that the work to be done shall, of necessity, be correlated, and that order may be brought out of confusion.

There should be a governing, directing body, that we may all work to a common goal, and in so doing may not have a duplication of efforts; also to avoid useless expenditure of money and energy in making for little things, which in our local analysis may appear as big things, so that we may have all the benefit and profit of the experience of the big men in the game; so that when Mr. Gompers proposes an act in Congress which will destroy efficiency methods in governmental work, every business men's or-

ganization in the United States may get busy on a concerted plan to combat such proposals.

If the business men of this country expect to cope with the American Federation of Labor, they must have a body at least as well coördinated, as well organized in detail, and as strongly federated among States.

Business men's organizations must be taught to affiliate more closely, and to act together simultaneously for a common cause, else there will be no great results. For city and State business men's organizations to continue to act as units or not to act at all in the larger movements, such as political ones, is no different than for individuals to act separately or not at all. Our local business associations are formed for the purpose of acting collectively in industrial, legislative, and other public matters where such collective action is imperative, for no other action has any force. How much more necessary collective action is in national affairs is most obvious.

We of the Pacific Coast are just now beginning to realize the great advantages and profits of larger and wider affiliation and coöperation. The Pacific Federation of Employers has been in active operation less than eighteen months. This Federation includes memberships in all the larger cities on the Coast, extending from the Canadian line on the north to the Mexican line on the south, a distance of nearly seventeen hundred miles.

Briefly, the results have been splendid. The Federation has produced organizations in cities which could not have had them otherwise. It has sustained and maintained weak organizations which would have entirely failed in their purposes without the Federation. I could cite you many concrete examples of such constructive activities. I believe that one-half the money and energy now contributed by members of business men's associations is virtually wasted by not having the direction of a national head. We are at present only going part way on the route. We are not finishing our task. We cannot hope to achieve the best and most needed results without a national federation.

We cannot be fully informed of the necessary fundamentals without the coöperation and affiliation of the best minds in this work. We need direction from outside our local environments—for they are obviously narrow. We are entitled to more profits and more attainments for our local expenditures of energy and money.

The American people has been long-suffering, and when we refer to the expenditures of energy and money which the business man so lavishly expends upon this and that organization, association, and combination, there is only one word to express this attitude on his part, and that is—foolish. He has been bled to death, financially, by organizations which should have accomplished results, and kept the channels in which business navigates free from rocks and obstructions. And always the main thing that brings prosperity, peace, and profit has been lost sight of, namely, the right to do business and the right to labor untrammelled. To bring about this condition seems never to have been thought of by the boost, buncombe, and bombast organizations which never get anywhere near a real diagnosis of the disease from which business is suffering. There is, therefore, only one way to secure results; more organization—not more organizations—a federation, if you please, to which ultimately the local successes of men will be called into a broader field, where larger numbers will profit by their knowledge and acumen; and where, then, the principles enunciated by our Pilgrim fathers, and upon which our Government is founded—the rights of the individual, the freedom to speak, worship, and labor—will be guaranteed and safeguarded.

“Much good work is spoiled for the lack of a little more.”

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